THE ORTHODOX WORD

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LETTERS

HYPNOSIS AND REINCARNATION

I read with great interest your article on reincarnation in the July-August issue of *The Orthodox Word*. Before taking the monastic tonsure, I was a professor of psychology at the University of California. Both during my teaching tenure and while completing my doctorate I had a deep interest in the subject of hypnosis, which, as you pointed out, is often used as a technique in the investigation of reincarnation. My own research and extensive research by a colleague in private practice with his patients led me to conclude that hypnosis is, indeed, a social psychological phenomenon; that is, it relies almost wholly on the subject's compliance to demand characteristics from the environment—from individuals, subtle physical cues, and even cognitive and physical states. I came to believe, along with Professor Barber, an eminent research design expert at UCLA who has published convincing studies regarding the hypnotic "state," that hypnosis is not an altered state of consciousness at all, but a system of social influence.

It follows that, if hypnosis is not an altered state of consciousness, the data reported by hypnotized subjects are normal data and therefore data subject to normal analytical categories. It is, then, not even crucial to find the origin of hypnotic data in daily experiences and to attempt to account for this or that anomaly. The data are by very definition of a usual nature and anything anomalous is logically the outcome of vivid imagination. Despite claims to the effect that physiological changes in brain wave patterns, blood pressure, and galvanic skin response occur, there is no evidence of an altered state of consciousness or a state of heightened perception during hypnosis. These physiological changes occur randomly in any situation and can be effected by simple concentration, changes in blood sugar levels, and situations of stress. They do not signal any changed perceptual state. (Interestingly enough, this fact reflects rather negatively on the claims of those who practice transcendental meditation that its increase in awareness can be monitored by physiological measures.)

Your observation that historical documents sometimes prove certain hypnotic insight only because of the demonic nature of the information revealed is a trenchant one. I believe that in many cases this must be so. But at the same time I feel that many of the so-called proofs of this kind are offered by non-scientists and individuals outside the mainstream of academic thought. They are therefore much more likely to escape careful scrutiny and are able better to perpetrate open fraud.

For what it is worth, my own experience as a psychologist, and that of my colleagues fully support the

(Continued on page 233

From this day, from this hour,
from this minute, let us strive
to love God above all,
and fulfill His holy will.

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Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd

***See The Orthodox Word**, No. 36,*

Archbishop Dimitry of Gdov

***See The Orthodox Word**, No. 37,*

AMONG THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF RUSSIA'S CATACOMB CHURCH

THE CATACOMB CHURCH

1979

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER ANDREEVICH CHERNOV*

A Russian emigre in Bulgaria before the Second World War, with a degree in theology and philosophy from the University of Sofia, A. A. Chernov was arrested by the invading Soviet armies during the War for his anti-Soviet political activities and spent 35 years in the USSR, 15 of them in prison camps and 20 literally "underground," before being allowed to leave the country quite recently. In his 20 years of "freedom" he was in close contact with the Catacomb Church of Russia, and his information on it given in this interview is the most recent we have from an actual member of this Church.

Question: How did you enter into the Catacomb Church?

Answer: I became acquainted with representatives of this Church in the camp in the 1940's. They were in prison for their faith, but it was according to the same Article 58.** With their help, when I left the camp (in 1955) I was already able to get into contact with the Catacomb Church, and I went underground. If I had not done this they would not have left me in peace, but as it is for twenty years I was able to do something.

At the time I entered the Catacomb Church, my conception of life in the Soviet Union was totally non-existent. After all, I had never been

* Translated from *Possev,* a monthly magazine published in Frankfort-am-Main, October, 1979, pp. 140-146.

** Of the Soviet Constitution: for "anti-Soviet activities."

outside of prison in the Soviet Union, and I had no idea what life was like there. In the Catacomb Church I was completely hidden, and I lived literally within four walls. I was never under the open sky, and the sun never shone on me. I learned about life outside gradually, from the accounts of others, and during the times I was being transferred to new places. I often had to be transferred: with the least suspicion of danger to me I was immediately transferred a great distance away, as a rule, from one republic to another, some thousands of kilometers from my previous hiding place. I was very much protected because of my theological education, since such people in the Catacomb Church have always been and are in short supply.

Question: Tell us, please, a few words about how the Catacomb Church arose.

Answer: The Catacomb Church appeared together with the Soviet regime, when the first priests and bishops were executed without trial, when they began to destroy the churches, when Christians began to give refuge to those who were being sought by the persecutors. Patriarch Tikhon understood that the majority of the bishops were threatened by death; after all, where could one hide metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops who were known to everyone? Therefore, recognizing that the Church could no longer remain entirely open, Patriarch Tikhon at almost every service ordained bishops, even in small cities. It is considered that under him there were ordained about one thousand bishops*; they could lose themselves in the midst of the people and place a beginning for the Catacomb Church. When the official Church began openly to cooperate with the Communists (in 1927), then for the Catacomb Church there was no longer any possibility of communion with her.

Question: How is the Catacomb Church organized?

Answer: It is easiest to imagine this in graph form: There is a large circumference and its center. The circumference is the immense multitude of points or cells of the Church. Between these cells there is no contact, but they all have a connection of ideas with the "center," in some form or other.

Question: It is interesting that this is similar to the structure of the NTS (political party) in the country: the same cells, although the center is abroad. This kind of organizational system of underground organizations in a totalitarian land we call "molecular," founded on the spontaneous arising of points of opposition in the country .

Ed. Note: This figure seems high, even if it were to include all the bishops ordained in the 1920's and 30's. Probably not many more than 300 bishops are known to us by name from this period, although, of course, we have almost no information whatever about the secret ordinations of this period.

Answer: Probably this happens somehow by itself, if one decides to act in the underground. Cells in the Catacomb Church are also formed without any kind of initiative from the center. A man simply comes to the conclusion that the official Church is not the Church. It is created by the Party, penetrated by the KGB. He begins to pray at home. Thus, a "house church" arises, just as in Apostolic times when the Church of Christ was persecuted. The Holy Apostle Paul in his Epistles writes just these words: "the house church" (Rom. 16:5). The whole Catacomb Church is precisely an immense multitude of "house churches." Each one of them is most concerned with how to be secret and unnoticed.

This whole mass of cells lives a varied life: there are those who are just beginning, but there are also real monastery sketes where the services go on *ceaselessly* the whole day long from year to year. I was able to be in some real underground churches. Sometimes such churches are built in caves. There are some groups in which the members of the Catacomb Church lead a most ascetic way of life, and the regime itself, when it uncovers them from time to time, is astonished by the way these people live.

In the Catacomb Church there are strict rules of security. In short, this is a large underground organization which has been acting in the USSR for sixty years already. Of course, one cannot speak about it as some kind of unchanging organization, always the same. Everything changes with the course of time. Gradually its membership changes, and its rules change also—they become all the time more drastic. The Catacomb Church strives outwardly not to manifest itself at all, to preserve itself; therefore it is not so easy to find it, and in the West, I think, very little is known about it. In any case it is a large group of people into which the regime is not able to penetrate. But attempts are made to do this. Knowing about the lack of priests in the Catacomb Church, the regime tries to send to us its agents under the appearance of priests. For example, there have been cases where such ones have tried to pass themselves off for people who received the priesthood from Metropolitan Philaret of New York.

But despite the lack of priests, the Catacomb Church is not dying out, as Father Dimitry Dudko thinks.* The skeleton of it remains the same—and knowing the history of the Ecumenical Church, one should not underestimate this. When the priests did not hold their ground, then it was monasticism that preserved the truth. Let us hope in God. All our hope is only

* In a letter published earlier this year in *Possev,* Fr. Dimitry wrote, not that the Catacomb Church is "dying out," but more simply that it has too few clergy to take care of the needs of the Orthodox population of Russia. (Ed. note.)

in God. *My strength is made perfect in weakness* (II Cor. 12:9). In the Catacomb Church is the remnant of Holy Russia, which, despite all its attempts, the Soviet God-fighting regime has not been able to annihilate up to this time.

We know that the boundaries of the Church do not correspond with the boundaries of the State. And therefore, the Catacomb Church looks with hope and expectation upon the Russian Church Outside of Russia. When we hear a voice that says that perhaps there are no longer any bishops in our Church here, we reply: Well, we have a "gold reserve" of them there, outside of Russia.

Question: But still, is there any contact between these cells that gives anyone the right to speak of the existence in the USSR of a Catacomb Church as a certain unity?

Answer: Yes, without doubt. First of all, they are all united by the acceptance and evaluation of our times as the "last times." The USSR is a spiritual phenomenon of these last times, which is revealing itself in a totalitarian fight against God. It is entirely understandable that the USSR has created its own "Church" also, in the image and likeness of itself. The Soviet kind of "Church" serves only for deception and not for the satisfaction of the religious seekings of the people. When the regime finds it necessary, this Church will cease its existence.

Question: However, most recently there have been changes in this Church. And there are such worthy people there as Father Dimitry Dudko and tens of others.

Answer: The existence in the Soviet Church of Father Dimitry Dudko and certain ones like him is not an apology for it. The Soviet Church has not changed in its essence and it remains the creature of the Soviet regime. The Catacomb Church does not recognize either the Soviet regime or its Church. These are precisely the two basic conditions which brought about the Catacomb Church.

Question: What in your opinion is the number of members of the Catacomb Church?

Answer: No one knows precisely, but I suppose that there are millions. I will give you figures from the secret report of the Inspector of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, E.N. Klimov, who is responsible for checking the atheistic activities of priests. (Yes, that's not a mistake: the

atheistic activities of *priests!*) About six years ago at one of its secret reports for teachers (entrance was only by a special pass), he cited two figures: 52 million parishioners in the official Church, and 48 million in the Catacomb Church. How these figures were obtained, and what is meant here by the Catacomb Church, and whether the regime includes here various sects also—this I cannot say. However, I consider that to divide parishioners thus into the Catacomb Church and the official Church is not entirely correct. I know of one Moscow engineer, for example, who goes to services of the official Church but does not receive Communion, and when during the petitions they pray for the government, he reads his own petition for the opposite. In real life the Catacomb and official Churches overlap each other, and it is impossible to make a boundary between them.

The most extreme section of the Catacomb Church is the True Orthodox Christians (TOC). They received me entirely as one of their own, since I had no kind of relations with the regime and did not even have a single worker's ticket. But they will not accept any kind of Communist in their group. For me, this limitation—membership in the Party—should not be a disqualification. If one does not accept Communists, that means one only strengthens them in their own way and drives them away. Father Vlassy, a Catacomb Schema-hieromonk, now reposed, related how through one spiritual son of his a highly-placed Party member appealed to him and asked him to come to give him Communion, and he even sent his own car at night for him. In the house of this man there were splendid ancient icons and an icon lamp. And this Party member said: "I entreat you, judge for yourself: if it is essential that I leave the Party, I will leave the Party tomorrow. I know what this will mean for me. But if it is possible—then leave everything the way it is, because in soul I am absolutely not a Communist."

Question: Tell us, please, a few words about your last arrest in Kiev (in 1975).

Answer: In a few words, I was arrested for religious samizdat publications. They found nothing on me, since I was arrested on the train, but they found at the house of P.P. Savitsky one of my religious-historical works. At the interrogation I said the following: "Here you have the essence of my crime. There is a law, and judge me according to this law, but I will speak only about myself and not about anyone else." And so they were not able to get anything from me, and I was again sent to camp.

If one were to compare the Soviet camps in the '50's and the '70's, I felt better in the former—and not only because I was younger then. For foreigners the conditions in camp are better than usual; but Russians are plagued the whole day long with loudspeakers: from morning till night, from day to day, one and the same Soviet songs. This wears one out a great deal, since there is nowhere one can escape from it.

Question: How did you manage to get to the West?

Answer: First of all, this was a miracle of God's mercy. I, as a person without citizenship, being deprived in the Soviet Union of foreign citizenship, fought for more than a year to leave the USSR. I wrote three times to Brezhnev something like this: "I'm not "yours" and I will never be yours. You are sending "your own" out of the country and depriving them of Soviet citizenship. With me it is simpler—you don't have to deprive me of anything. For you I am some kind of foreign body. Give me freedom. I have been deprived of freedom already for 35 years. I'm already an old man and sick. Here, I have no one, but there I have relatives. I have already been in camps twice. Do I have to wait for the third time?

And I left chiefly for the following reason: There it seemed to us that abroad people were not understanding the situation of the Catacomb Church in the USSR. The Catacomb Church is the antipodes of the Soviet Church. I would wish to achieve this result: that outside of Russia, at least, there would be accepted some kind of official formulation of a different approach to the official Church on the one hand, and to the Catacomb Church on the other.

I have spoken with some highly-placed representatives of the Church Outside of Russia, but unfortunately I have not obtained a full contact. But I will seek understanding, a creative discussion of sorts, if I am able. I am a small representative of the Catacomb Church, but I am in great debt before her. And I cannot give up these positions—after all, people there are living by them, and for them so many martyrs have shed their blood. And I dare to assure you that the Catacomb people are in the millions.

VITA PATRUM

THE LIFE OF THE FATHERS

By Saint Gregory of Tours

CHAPTER SIX

Saint Gallus the Bishop

A SENATOR'S SON WHO FORSOOK THE WORLD
AND GAINED THE HEAVENS

THOSE WHO ARE at the summit of worldly nobility always aspire ardently for that which can satisfy their passions: they rejoice in honors, are puffed up with prosperity, agitate the courts with legal actions, live by theft, take pleasure in slanders, avidly desire gold which tarnishes—and when they have a little of it they are inflamed with the desire to amass more, and the more they accumulate the more their thirst increases, as Prudentius* says "For the hunger for gold is increased by gold."

Whence it happens that while they rejoice in the pomps of this world and are charmed by vain honors, they keep nothing in mind of those worthwhile things which are to endure, and they do not consider the things which are not seen, as long as they possess to their harm those things which they think can satisfy their souls. But there are those who, like birds escaping from a trap and rising up on high, have freed themselves by the disposition of a more animated spirit. Forsaking and despising earthly goods, they have turned with all their might toward heavenly things.

Such a one was Saint Gallus, an inhabitant of the city of Clermont, who could be turned away from the worship of God neither by the splendor of his birth, nor by the height of the senatorial rank, nor by his immense wealth; who could be separated from the love of God neither by the affection of his father, nor by the tenderness of his mother, nor by the love of those who had nursed him, nor by the obedience of his servants. But considering all

* The 4th-century Christian poet.

these things as nothing, and scorning them as dung, cherishing God and vowing himself to His service, he submitted to the monastic rule; for he knew that the flames of ardent youth could not be overcome except by submission to lawful reprimand and the severest discipline. He knew also that he had to raise himself from the baseness of the world to higher things and to attain by patience to the height of glory, which later came to pass.

1. Saint Gallus was devoted to God from childhood; he loved the Lord with all his soul and cherished all those things he knew to be beloved of God. His father's name was Georgius, and his mother's Leocadia, of the lineage of Vectius Epagatus, who suffered martyrdom at Lyons, according to Eusebius in his *History* (*of the Church*).* Hence they were among the principal senators, so that no one was found in Gaul more generous or nobler. And although his father wished to look for a daughter of some noble senator for him, he went away with a young servant and retired to the monastery of Crononense, six miles from the city of Clermont, humbly asking the abbot that he would deign to tonsure him. This abbot, seeing the prudence and comeliness of the youth, asked his name, his family, and his country. He answered that he was called Gallus, a citizen of Clermont, and was a son of the senator Georgius. When the abbot found out that he belonged to the first family of the city, he said: "You desire well, my son, but first this matter must come to your father's notice, and if he consents to it I will do what you desire." Then the abbot sent to his father to ask him what he commanded to be done regarding his son. His father, a little saddened, said, "He was my first-born son, and therefore I wished him to be joined in marriage; but if the Lord has vouchsafed to join him to His service, may His will be done rather than mine." And he added, "Do whatever the boy asks of you by the inspiration of God."

2. Then the abbot, learning these things from those whom he had sent, made the boy a cleric. He was perfectly chaste, and even as he had no unseemly desires when older, so then also he abstained from youthful exuberance. His voice was of a marvellous sweetness; he sang pleasingly, continually applied himself to his studies, delighted in fasting, and abstained much from food. When the blessed bishop Quintianus came to that same monastery and heard him sing, he did not allow him to remain there longer, but took him with himself to the city and brought him up, like a heavenly father, in the sweetness of spiritual life.

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* Book V, 1; Vectius Epagatus was martyred in 177 A.D.

After his father had died, since his voice improved more and more with the coming of each day and he enjoyed the greatest esteem among the people, King Theoderic was informed of him, and he had the youth brought right away and took such a liking to him that he loved him more than his own son. The queen also cherished him with a similar love, not only because of the beauty of his voice but also because of his bodily chastity. At that time King Theoderic took from Clermont many clerics, whom he ordered to the service of the Lord in the church of Treves; and there he never allowed the blessed Gallus to be separated from him.

Thus it happened that when the king went to Cologne, Gallus went with him. Now there was a temple in that city filled with various ornaments, where the barbarians of the region would make offerings and gorge themselves with food and wine until they would vomit. There too they worshipped idols as gods and would place likenesses of human limbs which they sculptured in wood when some part of their body was stricken with illness. As soon as Saint Gallus learned of this, he immediately hastened there with one other cleric, and having kindled a fire, he burned down the temple while none of the ignorant pagans were present. But they, seeing the smoke from the temple rising in the sky, sought out the maker of the fire, and after finding him pursued him with bared swords. He took flight and hid himself in the royal palace. Knowing what had taken place from the pagans' threats, the king pacified them with soft words and thus calmed their insensate fury. The blessed man had the habit of often recounting this act with tears and would say, "Woe to me who did not remain, that I might have ended my life in this affair." At that time he was fulfilling the office of deacon.

3. Now when the blessed bishop Quintianus passed from this life at the Lord's command, Saint Gallus at that time was living in Clermont. The residents of Clermont gathered at the house of the priest Impetratus, Gallus' uncle, bewailing the bishop's death and inquiring who ought to be put in his place. For a long time they debated this question, and then each went to his own home. After they had departed, Saint Gallus called one of the clerics, and full of the Holy Spirit he said, "Why are these people lamenting? What are they running after? Toward what are they turning their thoughts? Their effort is vain, for I shall be bishop: the Lord has vouchsafed to bestow this honor upon me. As for you, when you hear that I have gone from the king's presence, take my predecessor's horse in harness and come to me. But if you disdain to hear me, beware lest you regret it later."

While he was saying this, he was lying on his bed. Then the cleric

was angered against him, and after having reproached him greatly, he injured the Saint's side, striking it against the side of the bed, and left in agitation. After his departure the priest Impetratus said to the blessed Gallus, "My son, listen to my counsel. Do not delay, but go to the king and inform of what has taken place here, and, if the Lord inspires him that you be given this bishopric, we will give great thanks to God for it; if he acts otherwise, at least you will commend yourself to whoever will be ordained bishop."

So he went and told the king what had happened concerning the blessed Quintianus. Then Aprunculus, bishop of Treves, also died. The clergy of that city, having come together before King Theoderic, asked for Saint Gallus as their bishop. The king said to them, "Go back and look for another, for I have reserved the deacon Gallus for something else." So they chose Saint Nicetius and received him.*

As for the clergy of Clermont, they came to the king with the popular approval and many presents. At that time that noxious sprout had already begun to grow whereby a bishopric was sold by the king and bought by clerics. The clergy of Clermont heard from the king that they would have Saint Gallus for bishop. When he had been ordained priest, the king commanded that the citizens be invited to a feast given at public expense, so that they might rejoice in the honor of Gallus, their future bishop; and so this was done. St. Gallus used to say that for his bishopric he had given no more than one-third of a copper coin to the cook who had prepared the feast. After this, the king sent him to Clermont, giving him two bishops to accompany him for his consolation.

As for the cleric (whose name was Viventius) who had injured Gallus' side against the edge of the bed, he hastened to come before the hierarch, according to the latter's word—but not without great confusion—and brought himself together with the horse which the Saint had demanded. When they had both gone to the baths, Saint Gallus reproached him lightly for the pain in the side he owed to the violence of the cleric's pride and caused him great shame by his words, not spoken with anger, but rather cheering him up with a certain spirited playfulness. Then he entered the city, where he was received with much psalmody and was ordained bishop in his church.

4. After he had assumed the bishopric, he conducted himself towards everyone with so much humility and love that he was cherished by all. He had a more than human patience, so that—if one may speak thus—he could be compared to Moses for the bearing of various injuries. And so it happened that if during a meal he were struck on the head by his priest. he would keep

* The Life of St. Nicetius of Treves is chapter 17 of *The Life of the Fathers*.

himself so calm as to utter no sharp word; but patiently bearing all that came to him, he would cast it upon the judgment of God, by Whom he sought to be sustained. Thus, when one Evodius, a priest of a senatorial family, had provoked him with calumnies and outrages at a church meal, the bishop got up and went out to the place in the city where the holy basilicas were. When this was made known to Evodius, he quickly ran after him and cast himself at his feet in the middle of the street, asking pardon and begging that the bishop's prayer to the Almighty Judge not bring about his condemnation. But the bishop, raising him up with kindness generously pardoned him for everything he had said, only admonishing him for the future not to dare to attack the Lord's bishops, because he himself would never deserve to receive a bishopric, as later proved to be the case. For when he had already been elected bishop of Gabalitanus and was already on the episcopal throne, and all was ready for his consecration, then all at once the people rose up against him, so that he scarcely escaped alive, and in the end he died a simple priest.

5. In the city of Arles, after the bishop Mark had been accused by evil men and sent into exile, a large assembly of bishops was gathered by order of King Childebert. In that synod* the blessed bishops recognized that all that was entered in complaint against the bishop was without foundation, and they restored him to his city and see. There was then in Saint Gallus' service a deacon, Valentinian, who is now priest and singer; at the time when another bishop was saying the Liturgy and this deacon wished to sing, out of vanity rather than in the fear of God, he was forbidden by Saint Gallus, who said to him, "Leave off, my son. When by God's will we celebrate the solemnities, it is then that you ought to sing. But now let the singing be done by the clerics of him who is consecrating the Liturgy." But he said he could sing at the present time too, to which the bishop replied, "Do what you will, but you will not accomplish what you desire." The deacon, taking no account of the hierarch's command, went out, but he sang so disagreeably that he was mocked by all. When another Sunday came, and Saint Gallus was saying the Liturgy, he ordered the deacon to be present, saying: "Now, in the Lord's name, you will sing as you wish." Upon his doing so, his voice was so beautiful that he was praised for it by everyone. O blessed man to whom so much grace was given that men's voices as well as their souls were put under his authority, to the point of being able either to hinder them from singing or to permit them to sing!

* The fifth Council of Arles, which met in 549.

6. God also performed by him other miracles. When one Julian, first a defense counsel and later a priest, a man of very agreeable character, was seized with a severe quartan fever, he betook himself to the holy bishop's bed where, lying down, covering himself with the bedclothes, and sleeping a little, he was so healed that afterwards he was in no way affected by that infirmity.

Once when the city of Clermont was engulfed by a great fire and the holy man learned of it, he went into the church and for a long time prayed to the Lord with tears before the holy altar-table; then, arising and taking the Gospel, he went out and held it up, opened, before the fire. When he did so, the flames died out at the sight of him, so that not a single spark of that fire remained.

In his time the city of Clermont was shaken by a great earthquake. We do not know why this happened, but we do know that none of the people were hurt.

When that epidemic which they call bubonic plague was raging in various regions and ravaging the province of Arles worst of all, Saint Gallus feared not so much for himself as for his people. And, while he was praying to the Lord night and day in order that in his lifetime he might not see his people devastated, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, with hair and garment white as snow, and said to him, "O priest, the Divine goodness regards favorably your supplication for the people. Therefore do not fear, for your prayer has been heard, and see! You will be free from this infirmity with your people, and no one, while you live, will perish in this land from this epidemic. Do not be afraid now, but after the completion of eight years you will depart from this world." Indeed, this came to pass later. Having awakened, and giving thanks to God for this consolation with which He had vouchsafed to comfort him by the heavenly messenger, Saint Gallus instituted those rogations which are performed in mid-Lent as they go on foot to the basilica of blessed Julian the Martyr while singing psalms. There are about 360 furlongs in this route. So then, while the plague was ravaging these parts, as we have said, it did not touch the city of Clermont, through the prayers of Saint Gallus. And I think it no little grace which he merited, that this shepherd did not see his flock devoured by the epidemic, for the Lord protected it.

7. But let us come to the time when the Lord ordered him taken from this world. When he was sick in bed, an internal fever so wasted all his members that he lost his hair and beard at the same time. Having learned

by a revelation from the Lord that he would die in three days, he assembled the people, and having broken the Bread, he distributed (Holy) Communion with a holy and pious will. On the third day, which was a Sunday, and which brought mourning to the citizens of Clermont, as the sky began to grow light, he asked what they were singing in church. They said that they were singing the benediction. And he sang the fiftieth psalm and the benediction and recited the Alleluia with the short chapter and thus finished Matins. At the end of the office he said, "We bid you farewell, brethren." And saying this, stretching forth his limbs, he rendered to the Lord his spirit which had always been directed toward Heaven. He departed in the sixty-fifth year of his age, the twenty-seventh year of his episcopate.

Then, having been washed and vested, he was carried into the church, until the bishops of the province would come to bury him. A great miracle was also accomplished there before the people: the Saint of God drew up his right foot on the bier and turned himself to the side which was toward the altar. When these things had taken place, the rogations were celebrated which occur each year in the Paschal season. He lay three days in the church, with continuous psalmody and a great concourse of people. The bishops arrived on the fourth day; taking him up out of the church and carrying him to the basilica of Saint Laurence, they buried him there.

What mourning there was at his funeral and how many people were present can scarcely be told. The women were there in mourning-dress as if they had lost their husbands, and similarly the men covered their heads as if they were at the funerals of their wives. They were even followed by some Jews, weeping and holding lamps. And all the people said, with one voice, "Woe to us, who from this day will never deserve to have such a hierarch."

And since the bishops of the province, as we have said, being very far away, could not come promptly, the faithful, as was the custom of the country folk, put sod on the Saint's body so that it would not swell from the heat. And after the funeral ceremonies, a certain woman, or rather, as I have learned with care, a virgin most pure and devoted to God, named Meratina, took away the sod which had been removed by others and placed it in her garden. She watered it often, and, as the Lord granted the increase, she kept it alive. The sick who would carry away the growth from this sod and take it in a drink were healed, and even a believer who only prayed over it obtained his request. Later, being neglected after the virgin's death, the sod died.

Many miracles were worked at his spulchre. Those who were sick of quartan fever and various other fevers recovered their health as soon as

they had touched the blessed tomb with faith. The singer Valentinian (of whom we spoke earlier and who is now a priest), when he was serving as deacon, was attacked by quartan fever and was gravely ill from it for several days. It happened that on the day of an attack of this fever, he had decided to visit the holy places and pray there; coming to the Saint's sepulchre and prostrating himself, he said, "Remember me, most blessed and holy priest. By you I was raised, instructed, and encouraged. Remember your own disciple whom you loved with a rare love, and deliver me from the fever which possesses me." This said, he collected the little shoots which had been scattered by the devout in honor of the Saint around his tomb, and, as they were green, he put them in his mouth, ground them with his teeth, and swallowed the juice. The day passed without his being troubled by the fever, and thereafter he was so restored to health that he no longer even had what are commonly called the shivers. I heard this from the mouth of the priest himself. And there is no doubt that it is He Who called Lazarus from the tomb Who causes miracles to come forth, by His power, from the tombs of His servants.

NOTES

St. Gallus, the successor of St. Quintianus (see Chapter Four) as Bishop of Clermont, succeeded him in 525 and died in 551; he is commemorated on July 1.

St. Gallus was St. Gregory's own uncle, the brother of his father, whom St. Gregory knew personally, even though he was only 13 when St. Gallus died.

King Theoderic (Thierry I, d. 534) and King Childebert I (d. 558) were both sons of King Clovis who, on the latter's death in 511, divided his kingdom with two other brothers. Theoderic reigned in the northern part of the realm (including Treves or Trier, Cologne and other parts of present-day Germany), where paganism was still strong in the 6th century. Later chapters of *Vita Patrum* describe some of the Christian missionary work among the pagans there. Theoderic's queen was Suavegotha, daughter of the holy King Sigismund (see *The History of the Franks,* III, 5).

The basilica of St. Laurence, where St. Gallus was interred, was a short distance from the cathedral church of Clermont; it evidently fell into ruins in early times, and the tomb of St. Gallus was lost. The Saint's funeral epitaph was written by the Christian poet Fortunatus (Carmina, I: IV, 4).

THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

TRUE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCES OF HEAVEN

1. The "Location" of Heaven and Hell

We have now seen, through numerous accounts of Holy Fathers and in Lives of Saints, that the soul after death enters immediately into the aerial realm of the under-heaven, whose characteristics we have examined in detail. We have also seen that the progress of the soul through this aerial realm, once the body has actually died and the soul is finished with earthly things, is described as an ascent through the toll-houses, where the Particular Judgment begins in order to determine the fitness of the soul to dwell in heaven. Those souls that are convicted of unrepented sins are cast down by the fallen spirits into hell; those that pass successfully through the trials of the toll-houses ascend freely, guided by angels, to heaven.

What is this heaven? Where is it? Is heaven a place? Is it "up"?

As with all matters concerning life after death, we should not ask such questions out of mere curiosity, but solely in order to understand better the teaching on this subject which the Church has handed down to us, and to escape the confusions which modern ideas and some psychic experiences can cause even in Orthodox Christians.

It so happens that the question of th "location" of heaven (and hell) is one that has been very widely misunderstood in modern times. It was only a few years ago

that the Soviet dictator Krushchev was laughing at religious people who still believed in heaven—he had sent "cosmonauts" into space and they had not seen it!

No thinking Christian, of course, believes in the atheist caricature of a heaven "in the sky," although there are some naive Protestants who would place heaven in a distant galaxy or constellation; the whole visible creation is fallen and corrupt, and there is no place in it anywhere for the invisible heaven of God, which is a spiritual and not a material reality. But many Christians, in order to escape the mockery of unbelievers and avoid even the slightest taint of any materialistic conception, have gone to an opposite extreme and declare that heaven is "nowhere." Among Roman Catholics and Protestants there are sophisticated apologies which proclaim that heaven is "a state, not a place," that "up" is only a metaphor, that the Ascension of Christ (Luke 24:50-51, Acts 1:9-11) was not really an "ascension," but only a change of state. The result of such apologies is that heaven and hell become very vague and indefinite conceptions, and the sense of their reality begins to disappear—with disastrous results for Christian life, because these are the very realities toward which our whole earthly life is directed.

All such apologies, according to the teaching of Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, are based on the false idea of the modern philosopher Descartes that everything that is not material is "pure spirit" and is not limited by time and space. This is not the teaching of the Orthodox Church. Bishop Ignatius writes: "The fantasy of Descartes concerning the independence of spirits on space and time is a decisive absurdity. Everything that is limited is necessarily dependent on space" (vol. III, p. 312). "The numerous quotations cited above from the Divine service books and the works of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church decide with complete satisfaction the question as to where paradise and hell are located . . . With what clarity the teaching of the Orthodox Eastern Church indicates that *the location of paradise is in the heaven* and *the location of hell is in the bowels of the earth*" (vol. III, pp. 308-9; the emphasis is his). Here we

shall only indicate just how this teaching is to be interpreted.

It is certainly true, as Bishop Ignatius' numerous citations indicate, that all Orthodox sources—the Holy Scripture, Divine services, Lives of Saints, writings of Holy Fathers—speak of paradise and heaven as "up" and hell as "down," under the earth. And it is also true that since angels and souls are limited in space (as we have seen in the chapter above on "The Orthodox Doctrine of Angels"), they must always be in one definite *place*—whether heaven, hell, or earth. We have already quoted the teaching of St. John Damascene that "when the angels are in heaven they are not on earth, and when they are sent to earth by God they do not remain in heaven" (*Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith,* II. 3, p. 206), which is only the same doctrine taught earlier by St. Basil the Great (*On the Holy Spirit,* ch. 23), St. Gregory the Dialogist (*Morals on the Book of Job,* Book II, 3), and indeed all the Orthodox Fathers.

Heaven, therefore, is certainly a place, and it is certainly *up* from any point on the earth, and hell is certainly *down,* in the bowels of the earth; but these places and their inhabitants cannot be seen by men until their spiritual eyes are opened, as we have seen earlier with regard to the aerial realm. Further, these places are not within the "coordinates" of our space-time system: an airliner does not pass "invisibly" through paradise, nor an earth satellite through the third heaven, nor can the souls waiting in hell for the Last Judgment be reached by drilling for them in the earth. They are not *there,* but in a different *kind* of space that begins right here but extends, as it were, in a different direction.

There are indications, or at least hints, of this other kind of reality even in everyday, this-worldly experience. For example, the existence of volcanos and of great heat in the center of the earth is taken by many Saints and Fathers as a direct indication of the existence of hell in the bowels of the earth.* Of course, hell is not "material" in the sense that the lava that flows up from under the crust of the earth

* See the Life of St. Patricius of Prussa, May 19; St. Gregory's *Dialogues,* IV, 36 and 44; Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, vol. III, p. 98.

is material; but there does seem to be a kind of "overlapping" of the two kinds of reality—an "overlapping" that can be seen first of all in the nature of man himself, who is capable, under certain circumstances or by God's will, of perceiving both kinds of reality even in this life. Modern scientists themselves have come to admit that they are no longer sure of the ultimate nature and boundaries of matter, nor where it leaves off and "psychic" reality begins.

Numerous incidents in the Lives of Saints show how this other kind of space "breaks into" the "normal" space of this world. Often, for example, the soul of a newly-deceased man is seen rising to heaven, as when St. Benedict saw the soul of St. Germanus of Capua carried to heaven by angels in a ball of fire (St. Gregory's *Dialogues,* II, 35), or the residents of Afognak saw St. Herman's soul ascending in a pillar of fire, or the Elder Philaret of Glinsk saw the soul of St. Seraphim of Sarov ascending. The Prophet Elisha beheld the Prophet Elijah taken up in a fiery chariot into heaven (III Kings 2:11). Often, also, souls are beheld going through the toll-houses; such cases are especially numerous in the Life of St. Niphon- of Contantia (Dec. 23) and St. Columba of Iona—some of the latter were quoted above in the chapter on the toll-houses. In the Life of Blessed Theophilus of Kiev, the one witness of the righteous one's death saw how at this time "something flashed before his gaze and a current of cool air struck his face. Dimitry looked upwards in amazement and became petrified. In the cell, the ceiling began to rise and the blue sky, as if extending its arms, was preparing to receive the holy soul of the dying righteous one."**

Beyond the general knowledge that heaven and hell are indeed "places," but not places in this world, in our space-time system—we need not be curious. These "places" are so different from our earthly notions of "place" that we shall become hopelessly confused if we attempt to piece together a "geography" of them. Some Lives of Saints indicate clearly that "heaven" is above "paradise"; others indicate that there

** See the Life of Bl. Theophilus (Feofil), Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N.Y., 1970, p. 125.

are at least "three heavens"—but it is not for us to define the "boundaries" of these places or to try to distinguish their characteristics. Such descriptions are given to us, in God's Providence, in order to inspire us to struggle to reach them by a Christian life and death—but not in order to apply to them worldly categories of logic and knowledge which do not fit them. St. John Chrysostom rightly recalls us to our proper concern in studying about heaven and hell: "You ask where hell is; but why should you know it? You must know that hell exists, not where it is hidden . . . In my opinion, it is somewhere outside this whole world . . . Let us attempt to find out not where it is, but how to escape it" (Homilies on Romans, 31:3-4).

It is not given us to understand very much of this other-worldly reality in this life, although we do know enough to answer the rationalists who say that heaven and hell are "nowhere" and therefore non-existent because they cannot see them. These places are indeed "somewhere," and some living on earth have been there and returned to tell of them; but these places are seen by us in the flesh more by faith than by knowledge: *Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known* (I Cor. 13:12).

2. *Christian Experiences of Heaven*

True Christian experiences of heaven always bear one and the same stamp of other-worldly experience. Those who have beheld heaven have not merely travelled to a different *place;* they have also entered into a whole different *spiritual state.* We who have not experienced this personally must be satisfied with the description of certain outward features which, taken together, distinguish these experiences rather clearly from all of the experiences of the aerial realm which we have examined above.

Numerous Lives of Saints contain descriptions of souls entering heaven, as seen from the earth. In the Life of St. Anthony the Great we read: "Another time, Anthony was sitting in the mountain, and looking up he saw one carried

on high, and a joyful band meeting him. Filled with wonder, he pronounced them a band of the blessed, and prayed to learn what this might be. And straightway came a voice to him, saying 'This is the soul of Ammon, the monk of Nitria, who led an ascetic life down to his old age'" (*Life of St. Anthony,* Eastern Orthodox Books edition, p. 38).

Abba Serapion thus described the death of St. Mark of Thrace: "Looking up, I beheld the soul of the Saint already being delivered from the bonds of the body. It was covered by angelic hands with a bright white garment and raised up by them to heaven. I beheld the aerial path to heaven and the opened heavens. Then I saw the hordes of demons standing on this path and heard an angelic voice addressed to the demons: 'Sons of darkness! Flee and hide yourselves from the face of the light of righteousness!' The holy soul of Mark was detained in the air for about one hour. Then a voice was heard from heaven, saying to the angels: 'Take and bring here him who put the demons to shame.' When the soul of the saint had passed without any harm to itself through the hordes of demons and had already drawn near to the opened heaven, I saw as it were the likeness of a hand stretched out from heaven receiving the immaculate soul. Then this vision was hidden from my eyes, and I saw nothing more" (Lives of Saints, April 5).

From these accounts we may already see three characteristics of the true Christian experience of heaven: It is an ascent; the soul is conducted by angels; it is greeted by and joins the company of the inhabitants of heaven.

Experiences of heaven are of various kinds. Sometimes a soul is conducted to heaven before death to be shown its wonders or the place prepared there for the soul. Thus, St. Maura, after resisting the two false visions of the fallen spirits during her martyrdom (described above as an example of the temptations that can occur at the hour of death), described the God-given experience that followed: "I also beheld a third man, very comely of appearance; his face shone like the sun. He took me by the hand, led me up to heaven, and showed me a throne covered with white garments, and

a crown, most beautiful in appearance. Amazed at such beauty, I asked the man that had led me up to heaven: 'Whose is this, my lord?' He told me: 'This is the reward for your struggle... But now return to your body. In the morning, at the sixth hour, the angels of God will come to take your soul up to heaven."*

There is also the experience of beholding heaven in vision from afar, as when the First Martyr St. Stephen beheld *the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God* (Acts 7:56). Here, however, we shall study only the specific experience that is most comparable to today's "after-death" experiences: the ascent to heaven, either at death or in a Divinely-granted experience, whether "in" or "out" of the body.

St. Salvius of Albi, a 6th-century hierarch of Gual, after being dead for the better part of a day, returned to life and gave this account to his friend, St. Gregory of Tours: "When my cell shook four days ago, and you saw me lying dead, I was raised up by two angels and carried to the highest peak of heaven, until I seemed to have beneath my feet not only this miserable earth, but also the sun and moon, the clouds and stars. Then I was conducted through a gate that shone more brightly than the light of the sun and entered a building where the whole floor shone with gold and silver. The light was impossible to describe. The place was filled with a multitude of people, neither male nor female, stretching so far in all directions that one could not see where it ended. The angels made a way for me through the crowd of people in front of me, and we came to the place towards which our gaze had been directed even when we had been far away. Over this place hung a cloud more brilliant than any light, and yet no sun or moon or star could be seen; indeed, the cloud shone more brightly than any of these with its own brilliance. A voice came out of the cloud, as the voice of many waters. Sinner that I am, I was greeted with great respect by a number of beings, some dressed in priestly vestments and

* Lives of Saints, May 3; English translation in *Orthodox Life,* May-June, 1978, pp. 9-17.

others in ordinary dress; my guides told me that these were the martyrs and other holy men whom we honor here on earth and to whom we pray with great devotion. As I stood here there was wafted over me a fragrance of such sweetness that, nourished by it, I have felt no need of food or drink until this very moment. Then I heard a voice which said: 'Let this man go back into the world, for our churches have need of him.' I heard the voice, but I could not see who was speaking. Then I prostrated myself on the ground and wept. 'Alas, alas, O Lord!' I said. 'Why hast Thou shown me these things only to take them away from me again? . . .' The voice which had spoken to me said: 'Go in peace. I will watch over you until I bring you back once more to this place.' Then my guides left me and I turned back through the gate by which I had entered, weeping as I went."*

Several more important characteristics are added in this experience: the brightness of the light of heaven; the invisible presence of the Lord, Whose voice is heard; the Saint's awe and fear before the Lord; and a tangible sensing of Divine grace, in the form of an indescribable fragrance. Further, it is specified that the multitudes of "people" encountered in heaven are (in addition to the angels who conduct souls) the souls of martyrs and holy men.

The monk of Wenlock, after being raised up by angels and passing through the toll-houses, "saw also a place of wondrous beauty, wherein a multitude of very handsome men were enjoying extraordinary happiness, and they invited him to come and share in their happiness if it were permitted to him. And a fragrance of wonderful sweetness came to him from the breath of the blessed souls rejoicing together. The holy angels told him that this was the famed Paradise of God." Further on, "he beheld shining walls of gleaming splendor of amazing length and enormous height. And the holy angels said: 'This is that sacred and famous city, the heavenly Jerusalem, where holy souls live in joy forever.' He said that those souls and the walls of that glorious city . . . were of such dazzling brilliance that his eyes

* *The History of the Franks,* Book VII, 1; *The Orthodox Word,* 1977, no. 76, pp. 198-9.

were utterly unable to look upon them" (*The Letters of St. Boniface,* pp. 28-29).

Perhaps the fullest and most striking experience of heaven recorded in Christian literature is that of St. Andrew, the Fool for Christ of Constantinople (9th century). This experience was written down in the Saint's own words by his friend Nicephorus; we give only some excerpts from it here:

Once, during a terrible winter when St. Andrew lay in a city street frozen and near death, he suddenly felt a warmth within him and beheld a splendid youth with a face shining like the sun, who conducted him to paradise and the third heaven. "By God's will I remained for two weeks in a sweet vision . . . I saw myself in a splendid and marvelous paradise . . . In mind and heart I was astonished at the unutterable beauty of the paradise of God, and I took sweet delight walking in it. There were a multitude of gardens there, filled with tall trees which, swaying in their tips, rejoiced my eyes, and from their branches there came forth a great fragrance . . . One cannot compare these trees in their beauty to any earthly tree . . . In these gardens there were innumerable birds with wings golden, snow-white, and of various colors. They sat on the branches of the trees of paradise and sang so wondrously that from the sweetness of their singing I was beside myself . . . After this a kind of fear fell upon me, and it seemed to me that I was standing at the peak of the firmament of heaven. Before me a youth was walking with a face as bright as the sun, clothed in purple . . . When I followed in his steps I saw a great and splendid Cross, in form like a rainbow, and around it stood fiery singers like flames and sang sweet hymns, glorifying the Lord Who had once been crucified on the Cross. The youth who was going before me, coming up to the Cross, kissed it and gave me a sign that I should also kiss the Cross . . . In kissing it I was filled with unutterable spiritual sweetness, and I smelled a fragrance more powerful than that of paradise. Going past the Cross, I looked down and saw under me as it were the abyss of the sea . . . My guide, turning to me, said, 'Fear not, for we must ascend yet higher.'

"And he gave me his hand. When I seized it we were already above the second firmament. There I saw wondrous men, their repose, and the joy of their feasting which cannot be communicated by the human tongue . . . And behold, after this we ascended above the third heaven, where I saw and heard a multitude of heavenly powers hymning and glorifying God. We went up to a curtain which shone like lightning, before which great and frightful youths were standing, in appearance like fiery flames . . . And the youth who was leading me said to me: 'When the curtain opens, you shall see the Master Christ. Bow down to the throne of His glory.' Hearing this, I rejoiced and trembled, for I was overcome by terror and unutterable joy . . . And behold, a flaming hand opened the curtain, and like the Prophet Isaiah I beheld my Lord, *sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and above it stood the Seraphim* (Isaiah 6:1). He was clothed in a purple garment; His face was most bright, and His eyes looked on me with love. Seeing this. I fell down before Him, bowing down to the most bright and fearful throne of His glory. The joy that overcame me on beholding His face cannot be expressed in words. Even now, remembering this vision, I am filled with unutterable joy. In trembling I lay there before my Master . . . After this all the heavenly host sang a most wondrous and unutterable hymn, and then—I myself do not understand how—again I found myself walking in paradise."*

When St. Andrew reflected that he had not seen the Mother of God in heaven, an angel told him: "Did you wish to see here the Queen Who is more brighter than the heavenly powers? She is not here; She has gone away to the world which lies in great misfortune, to help people and to comfort the sorrowing. I would have shown you Her holy place, but now there is no time, for you must again return." Here once more the fact is affirmed that angels and saints can be in only one place at a time.

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* Lives of Saints, October 2; English translation in *The Orthodox Word*, 1979, no. 86, pp. 125-7.

Even in the 19th century, a similar true vision of heaven was beheld by a disciple of Elder Paisius Velichkovsky, Schema-monk Theodore of Svir. Towards the end of his life he experienced God's grace very strongly. Shortly after one such experience he fell into a sickness and for three days was in a sort of coma. "When a state of ecstasy began in him and he came out of himself, there appeared to him a certain invisible youth, who was sensed and beheld by the feeling of the heart alone; and this youth led him by a narrow path towards the left. Father Theodore himself, as he later related, had the feeling that he had already died, and he said to himself: 'I have died. I do not know whether I shall be saved or perish.'

"'You are saved!' an invisible voice said to him in answer to this thought. And suddenly a power like a violent whirlwind carried him off and transported him to the right side.

"'Taste the sweetness of the betrothals of paradise which I give to those who love Me,' an invisible voice declared. With these words, it seemed to Father Theodore that the Saviour Himself placed His right hand on his heart, and he was transported into an unutterably pleasant dwelling, as it were, but one that was completely invisible and indescribable in the words of earthly language. From this feeling he went over to another even more exalted one, and then to a third one; but all these feelings, as he said himself, he could remember only with his heart, but could not understand with his mind.

"Then he saw something like a temple, and in it, near the altar, something like a tent, in which there were five or six men. A mental voice said: 'For the sake of these men your death is set aside. For them you will live.' Then the spiritual stature of some of his disciples was revealed to him, and the Lord declared to him the trials which were to disturb the evening of his days... But the Divine voice assured him that the ship of his soul would not suffer from these fierce waves, for its invisible guide was Christ."**

** From the *Life of Optina Elder Leonid,* St. Herman Brotherhood, 1976, pp. 275-6 (in Russian).

Other experiences of heaven from the Lives of Saints and ascetics could be given, but they do no more than repeat the characteristics already described here. It will be instructive, however—especially for purposes of a comparison with contemporary "after-death" experiences—to present the experience of a modern *sinner* in heaven. Thus, the author of "Unbelievable for Many" (whose testimony has already been quoted several times above), after escaping the demons of the toll-houses by the intercession of the Mother of God, described how, still being conducted by his angel-guides, "we were continuing to move upward . . . when I saw a bright light above me; it resembled, as it seemed to me, our sunlight, but was much more intense. There evidently is some kind of kingdom of light. Yes, precisely a kingdom, full of the power of light—because there was no shade with this light. 'But how can there be light without shade?' immediately my perplexed conceptions made their appearance.

"And suddenly we were quickly carried into the field of this light, and it literally blinded me. I shut my eyes, brought my hands up to my face, but this did not help since my hands did not give shade. And what did such protection mean here anyway?

" 'My God, what is this, what kind of light is this? Why for me it is like regular darkness! I cannot look, and as in darkness, can see nothing . . .'

"This incapacity to see, to look, increased in me the fear before the unknown, natural in this state of being found in a world unknown to me, and with alarm I thought: 'What will come next? Shall we soon pass this sphere of light, and is there a limit, an end?'

"But something different happened. Majestically, without wrath, but authoritatively and firmly, the words resounded from above: *Not ready!* And after that . . . an immediate stop came to our rapid flight upward—we quickly began to descend" (pp. 26-27).

In this experience the quality of the light of heaven is made clearer: it is of a kind that cannot be borne by one

who is not prepared for it by the Christian life of struggle such as Sts. Salvius and Andrew endured.

3. *Characteristics of the True Experience of Heaven*

Let us now summarize the main characteristics of these true experiences of heaven and see how they differ from the experiences of the aerial world as described in previous chapters.

(1) The true experience of heaven invariably occurs at the end of a process of *ascent,* usually through the toll-houses (if the soul has any "tolls" to pay there). In today's "out-of-body" and "after-death" experiences, on the other hand, the toll-houses and their demons are *never* encountered, and only occasionally is a process of ascent described.

(2) The soul is *always* conducted to heaven by an angel or angels, and never "wanders" into it or goes of its own will or motive power. This is surely one of the most striking differences between genuine experiences of heaven and the contemporary experiences of Pentecostals and others who describe "after-death" experiences of "paradise" and "heaven": the latter are virtually identical with secular and even atheist experiences of "paradise," as we have already seen, except in incidental points of interpretation, which can easily be supplied by the human imagination in the "astral plane"; but virtually never in such experiences is the soul conducted by angels. Of this St. John Chrysostom, in interpreting Luke 16:19-31, writes: "Lazarus then was conducted away by angels, but the soul of the other (the rich man) was taken by certain frightful powers who, it may be, were sent for this. *For the soul by itself cannot depart to that life,* because this is impossible. If we, in going from city to city, have need of a guide, how much more will the soul be in need of guides when it is torn away from the body and presented for the future life?"*

This point, indeed, may be taken as one of the touchstones of the authentic experience of heaven. In the con-

* Homily "To the People of Antioch," III, "On Lazarus," II, as cited in Metr. Macarius, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology,* II, p. 536.

temporary experiences the soul is most frequently offered a choice to remain in "paradise" or go back to earth; while the genuine experience of heaven occurs not by the choice of man but only at the command of God, fulfilled by His angels. The common "out-of-body" experience of "paradise" in our days has no need of a guide because it takes place *right here,* in the air above us, still *in this world;* while the presence of the guiding angels is necessary if the experience takes place *outside* this world, in a different kind of reality, where the soul cannot go by itself. (This is not to say that demons cannot masquerade as "guiding angels" also, but they seldom seem to do so in today's experiences.)

(3) The experience occurs in bright light, and is accompanied by manifest signs of Divine grace, in particular a wonderful fragrance. Such signs, it is true, sometimes are present in today's "after-death" experiences also, but there is a fundamental difference between them that can scarcely be over-emphasized. Today's experiences are superficial, even sensuous; there is nothing to distinguish them from the similar experiences of unbelievers save the Christian imagery which the observer sees in (or adds to) the experience; these are no more than the *natural* experience of pleasure in the "out-of-body" state with a thin "Christian" covering. (Perhaps, also, in some of them the fallen spirits are already adding their deceptions to entice the observer further into pride and confirm his superficial idea of Christianity; but here there is no need to determine this.) In the true Christian experiences, on the other hand, the depth of the experience is confirmed by truly miraculous occurrences: St. Salvius was so "nourished" by the fragrance that he needed no food or drink for over three days, and the fragrance vanished and his tongue became sore and swollen only the moment that he revealed his experience; St. Andrew was gone for two weeks; K. Uekskuell was "clinically dead" for 36 hours. In today's experiences, to be sure, there are sometimes "miraculous recoveries" from near or seeming death, but never anything as extraordinary as the above occurrences, and never anything to indicate that those who have experienced

them have actually seen *heaven* as opposed to a pleasing appearance in the "out-of-body" realm (the "astral plane"). The difference between today's experiences and the true experience of heaven is exactly the same as the difference between today's superficial "Christianity" and true Orthodox Christianity. The "peace," for example, that can be experienced by a person who has "accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour" or who has had the very common experience of contemporary "speaking in tongues," or has had a vision of "Christ" (something by no means rare today), but who knows nothing of the life of conscious Christian struggle and repentance and has never partaken of the true Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Mysteries instituted by Christ Himself—simply cannot be compared in any way with the peace that is revealed in the lives of the great Orthodox Saints. The contemporary experiences are literally "counterfeits" of the real experience of heaven.

(4) The true experience of heaven is accompanied by a feeling of such awe and fear before the greatness of God, and a feeling of such unworthiness to be beholding it, as are seldom found even among Orthodox Christians today, let alone those outside the Church of Christ. St. Salvius' heartfelt expressions of his unworthiness, St. Andrew's trembling prostration before Christ, even K. Uekskuell's blindness in the light he was unworthy to behold—are unheard of in today's experiences. Those who are seeing "paradise" in the aerial realm today are "pleased," "happy," "satisfied"—seldom anything more; if they behold "Christ" in some form, it is only to indulge in the familiar "dialogues" with him that characterize experiences in the "charismatic" movement. The element of the Divine and of man's awe before it, the fear of God, are absent in such experiences.

Other characteristics of the true experience of heaven, as recorded especially in the Orthodox Lives of Saints, could be set forth; but those discussed above are sufficient to distinguish them emphatically from today's experiences. Let us only remember, whenever we dare to talk of such exalted and other-worldly experiences, that they are far above our

low level of feeling and understanding, and that they are given to us more as *hints* than as complete descriptions of what cannot properly be described in human language at all. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him* (I Cor. 2:9).

A NOTE ON VISIONS OF HELL

For Orthodox believers the reality of hell is as certain as that of heaven. Our Lord Himself on many occasions spoke of those men whom, because they did not obey His commandments, He will send *into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. 25:41). In one of His parables, He gives the vivid example of the rich man who, condemned to hell because of his unrighteous deeds in this life, looks up to paradise which he has lost and begs the Patriarch Abraham there to allow Lazarus, the beggar whom he disdained while alive, to come and *dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.* But Abraham replies that *between us and you there is a great gulf fixed,* and there is no contact between the saved and the damned (Luke 16:24, 26).

In Orthodox literature visions of hell are as common as visions of heaven and paradise. Such visions and experiences, unlike visions of heaven, occur more commonly to ordinary sinners than to saints, and their purpose is always clear. St. Gregory in his Dialogues states: "In His unbounded mercy, the good God allows some souls to return to their bodies shortly after death, so that the sight of hell might at last teach them to fear the eternal punishments in which words alone could not make them believe (*Dialogues* IV, 37, p. 237). St. Gregory then describes several experiences of hell and tells of the impression they produced on the beholders. Thus, a certain Spanish hermit Peter died and saw "hell with all its torments and countless pools of fire." On returning to life, Peter described what he had seen, "but even had he kept silent, his penitential fasts and night watches

would have been eloquent witnesses to his terrifying visit to hell and his deep fear of its dreadful torments. God had shown Himself most merciful by not allowing him to die in this experience with death" (p. 238).

The 8th-century English chronicler, Venerable Bede, relates how a man from the province of Northumbria returned after being "dead" one whole night and related his experience of both paradise and hell. In hell, he found himself in dense darkness; "frequent masses of dusky flame suddenly appeared before us, rising as though from a great pit and falling back into it again... As the tongues of flame rose, they were filled with the souls of men which, like sparks flying up with the smoke, were sometimes flung high in the air, and at others dropped back into the depths as the vapors of the fire died down. Furthermore, an indescribable stench welled up with these vapors, and filled the whole of this gloomy place... I suddenly heard behind me the sound of a most hideous and desperate lamentation, accompanied by harsh laughter... I saw a throng of wicked spirits dragging with them five human souls howling and lamenting into the depths of the darkness while the devils laughed and exulted... Meanwhile, some of the dark spirits emerged from the fiery depths and rushed to surround me, harassing me with their glowing eyes and foul flames issuing from their mouths and nostrils..."*

In the Life of Taxiotes the Soldier it is related that after Taxiotes was stopped by the demonic "tax-collectors" at the toll-houses, "the evil spirits took me and began to beat me. They led me down into the earth, which had parted to receive us. I was conducted through narrow entrances and confining, evil-smelling cracks. When I reached the very depths of hell, I saw there the souls of sinners, confined in eternal darkness. Existence there cannot be called life, for it consists of nothing but suffering, tears that find no comfort, and a gnashing of teeth that can find no description. That place is forever full of the desperate cry: 'Woe, woe! Alas, alas!' It is impossible to describe all the suffering which hell

* Bede, *A History of the English Church and People,* tr. by Leo Sherley-Price, Penguin Books, 1975, Book V, 12, pp. 290-291.

contains, all its torments and pains. The departed groan from the depths of their heart, but no one pities them; they weep, but no one comforts them; they beg, but no one listens to them and delivers them. I too was confined in those dark regions, full of terrible sorrows, and wept and bitterly sobbed for six hours."**

The monk of Wenlock beheld a similar scene in the "lowest depths" of the earth, where "he heard a horrible, tremendous, and unspeakable groaning and weeping of souls in distress. And the angel said to him: 'The murmuring and crying which you hear down there comes from those souls to which the loving kindness of the Lord shall never come, but an undying flame shall torture them forever'" (*The Letters of St. Boniface,* p. 28).

Of course, we should not be overly fascinated by the literal details of such experiences, and even less than in the case of paradise and heaven should we try to piece together a "geography" of hell based on such accounts. The Western notions of "purgatory" and "limbo" are attempts to make such a "geography"; but Orthodox tradition knows only the one reality of hell in the underworld. Furthermore, as St. Mark of Ephesus teaches (see his Second Homily on Purgatorial Fire in Appendix I), what is seen in experiences of hell is often an image of future torments rather than a literal depiction of the present state of those awaiting the Last Judgment in hell. But whether it is an actual beholding of present realities or a vision of the future, the experience of hell as recorded in Orthodox sources is a powerful means of awakening one to a life of Christian struggle, which is the only means of escaping eternal torment; this is why God grants such experiences.

Are there any comparable experiences of hell in today's "after-death" literature?

Dr. Moody and most other investigators today have found almost no such experiences, as we have already seen. Earlier we explained this fact as due to the "comfortable"

** Lives of Saints, March 28; *Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave,* p. 170.

spiritual life of men today, who often have no fear of hell or knowledge of demons, and thus do not expect to see such things after death. However, a recent book on life after death has suggested another explanation which seems to be of equal value, while at the same time denying that the experience of hell is really as rare as it seems. Here we shall briefly examine the findings of this book.

Dr. Maurice Rawlings, a Tennessee physician who specializes in internal medicine and cardio-vascular diseases, has himself resuscitated many persons who have been "clinically dead." His own interviews of these persons have taught him that, "contrary to most published life-after-death cases, not all death experiences are good. Hell also exists! After my own realization of this fact I started collecting accounts of unpleasant cases that other investigators apparently had missed. This has happened, I think, because the investigators, normally psychiatrists, have never *resuscitated* a patient. They have not had the opportunity to be on the scene. The unpleasant experiences in my study have turned out to be at least as frequent as the pleasant ones."* "I have found that most of the bad experiences are soon suppressed deeply into the patient's subliminal or subconscious mind. These bad experiences seem to be so painful and disturbing that they are removed from conscious recall so that only the pleasant experiences—or no experiences at all—are recollected" (p. 65).

Dr. Rawlings describes his "model" of these experiences of hell: "As with those who have had good experiences, those reporting bad experiences may have trouble realizing they are dead as they watch people work on their dead bodies. They may also enter a dark passage after leaving the room, but instead of emerging into bright surroundings they enter a dark, dim environment where they encounter grotesque people who may be lurking in the shadows or along a burning lake of fire. The horrors defy description and are difficult to recall" (pp. 63-64). Various descriptions are given—includ-

* Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door,* Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1978, pp. 24-25.

ing some by "regular church members" who are surprised to find themselves in such a state—of manifestations of imps and grotesque giants, of a descent into blackness and a fiery heat, of a pit and an ocean of fire (pp. 103-110).

In general, these experiences—both in their shortness and in the absence of any angelic or demonic guides—lack the complete characteristics of genuine other-worldly experiences, and some of them are quite reminiscent of Robert Monroe's adventures in the "astral plane." But they do supply an important corrective to the widely-reported experience of "pleasantness" and "paradise" after death: the "out-of-body" realm is by no means all pleasantness and light, and those who have experienced its "hellish" side are closer to the truth of things than those who experience only "pleasure" in this state. The demons of the aerial realm expose something of their true nature to such ones, even giving them a hint of the torments to come for those who have not known Christ and been obedient to His commandments.

Next Issue: The Meaning of Today's "After-Death" Experiences.

A New Miracle

BY THE PRAYERS OF THE EVER-MEMORABLE ARCHBISHOP JOHN MAXIMOVITCH*

At the end of August, 1979, Hurricane "David" formed in the Atlantic Ocean. This hurricane had winds with a velocity in excess of 100 miles per hour and caused great destruction and death in the Dominican Republic.

From the direction of the movement of this hurricane, it was evident that it was moving towards Miami, Florida. On Saturday, September 1, there was no longer any doubt of this. On Sunday, September 2, orders were given by the local authorities to evacuate the part of the population residing on the ocean shore, where there were multi-story hotels. On September 3, Monday, early in the morning the radios and newspapers announced that "the hurricane has spared" Miami and passed by.

The author of this present note was at that time in Miami and would like to clarify how all this happened.

On Sunday, September 2, after the Liturgy in the Orthodox church of St. Vladimir in Miami, the priest served a panikhida for Archbishop John. When Russians had been staying on the island of Tubabao (in the Philippines thirty years ago), thanks to the ceaseless prayers of Vladika John the typhoons usual for this place did not occur. This was even noted by the local inhabitants, who often saw Vladika praying at night and signing the camp with the sign of the Cross. Once in the Philippines a powerful typhoon was heading in the direction of the camp. By the prayers of Vladika John, near the island the typhoon changed direction and did not hit the camp.

This same miracle occurred in Florida. After the panikhida for Vladika, Hurricane "David," approaching Miami, suddenly turned north and passed by. Thus, by the prayers of Vladika John even after his death, the Lord spared the inhabitants of this city.

May the Lord give rest to the soul of His departed servant, Archbishop John, and by his prayers have mercy on us!

K.K.M.

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* Translated from *Orthodox Russia*, 1979, no. 20, p. 16.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Eastern Orthodox Books

EASTERN ORTHODOX BOOKS of Willits, California, has recently suffered a disastrous fire which destroyed the family home and destroyed or badly damaged all its books and business records. The family is now urgently engaged in rebuilding the home and will be unable to offer books for sale for at least a year.

In *Russian Life,* the San Francisco Russian-language newspaper, Archbishop Anthony of Western America and San Francisco (Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia) has appealed to Orthodox Christians to help this family with monetary contributions (there was no insurance). He concludes his appeal with these words:

"Before our eyes this truly Christian family has grown up and served God. Let us give them to feel that they have brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us help them immediately, generously, and willingly. May it be thus! Give!"

Contributions may be sent to:

Vladimir Anderson
P.O. Box 302
Willits, California 95490

LETTERS

continued.

scientific data that your article presented. Prayerfully thanking you for the opportunity to comment, I remain with fraternal respect,

Archimandrite Chrysostomos
St. Gregory Palamas (Greek Old Calendar) Monastery
Hayersville, Ohio.

NEW SOVIET PERSECUTIONS OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

Alarming Condition of Orthodox Nun in Psychiatric Hospital

News has recently been received that Nun Valeria Makeeva (see "Letters" column, *The Orthodox Word,* no. 86) has been interned in Kazan Special Psychiatric Hospital and has been given intensive drug treatment which has paralyzed her right arm and caused a serious deterioration in her general state of health. The well-known Moscow priest, Fr. Dimitri Dudko, and others have called urgently for interventions to put an end to this barbaric treatment and to have her released.

At Mother Valeria's trial, it appears that serious violations of legal procedure took place. Her lawyer (she was not allowed to attend her own trial) cast serious doubts on whether she was breaking the law by her religious activities, but the court refused to investigate this point and on April 12, 1979, sentenced her for an indefinite period to compulsory treatment in the Special Psychiatric Hospital.

A message of sympathy and support (in any language) may be sent to Mother Valeria in the psychiatric hospital at the following address:

Tatarskaya ASSR
G. Kazan-82
ul. Sechenova
p/ya UE-148/ST-6
Makeeva. Valeriya
USSR

Such messages seldom get through to the person addressed, but Soviet authorities are very sensitive to public opinion in the free world, and the more such messages are sent, the better is the treatment for the prisoner in question. Each letter has its effect and helps the victims of religious persecution.

Four-Year Camp Sentence For Orthodox Christian

Sergei Yermolaev, a 20-year-old Orthodox Christian, was sentenced on September 24 to 4 years in a labor camp for allegedly shouting "Down with the Communist Party" on the Moscow Metro on the night of January 13-14 of this year. He is now being held in Butyrki prison awaiting transportation to labor camp.

Yermolaev is known to be a member of the Christian Seminar of Orthodox young people that was led by Alexander Ogorodnikov (who is also in labor camp). On May 15, 1978, he was thrown out of the building where Yuri Orlov was being tried, and on May 21, 1978, he was taken off a Smolensk-Moscow train, searched, and had two typewriters confiscated.

At a closed session on March 11, 1979, the judge of the Moscow Region People's Court referred Yermolaev to the local forensic psychiatric commission. But when the trial was

reconvened in open session on May 23, the psychiatric commission's report held that the evidence regarding a decision of Yermolaev's mental state was insufficient. The trial was therefore readjourned until Yermolaev had had a thorough examination by psychiatrists at the Serbsky Institute, to which he was transferred on June 1

Documents regarding the case include evidence that religious beliefs are regularly taken to be an automatic indication of mental illness. A copy or summary of the official report on his case lists the following evidence of Yermolaev's possible mental illness:

"Complains of headaches, twitches in the face and extremities. Volunteers that he has believed in God since childhood, attends church, holds a church office, wants to dedicate himself to the ministry. Resists dissuasion. Does not regret his violation of the law. Gives no evidence of being disturbed about his situation."

Other evidence, however, indicates that Yermolaev is in good mental health. The commission concluded: "Due to the unclarity of the clinical report, it is not possible to decide the question of (mental) responsibility by means of an out-patient examination."

The results of Yermolaev's further examination by psychiatrists at the Serbsky Institute are not known, but his sentence to 4 years in a labor camp indicates that Yermolaev was in fact found to be responsible for his actions.

A message of support to Sergei Yermolaev may be sent to him in Butyrki prison at the following address:

RSFSR
g. Moskva
Uchr. 1Z 48/2
Yermolaev, Sergei Lvovich
USSR

Messages should be sent, of course, by air mail, which costs 31 cents for one-half ounce from the U.S.A.

(Information from *Aid to the Russian Church,* Keston, England.)

A NEW BOOK

ELDER ZOSIMA

INTRODUCTION

RUSSIAN HESYCHASTS*

Hesychasm, or silence, is the mental activity, hidden in God, of the Jesus Prayer in the depths of the human heart. Through it the whole man is enlightened and sanctified. Just like the field of the Gospel parable, this treasure may be possessed by every true Orthodox Christian; however, very few are deemed worthy of attaining to the heights of dispassion in order to be called hesychasts. Russia has yielded a whole multitude of such spiritual giants, who have shone forth right up to our century, even in the Diaspora. Such was the famous Staretz Zosima, a contemporary and perhaps a close friend of our holy Father Herman of Alaska, when one lived on Valaam and the other on the neighboring island of Konevits.

Russia accepted hesychasm along with holy baptism at that time when the Christian world, in full spiritual bloom, had revealed to the human spirit the mystery of contemplative communion with God. Having accepted this fullness of Christianity with its whole heart, Russia immediately yielded such abundant spiritual fruit that when hesychasm underwent trials during the time of St. Gregory Palamas, it had already several centuries of experience which had nurtured a multitude of ascetic hesychasts, its own Northern Thebaid, and had itself become Holy Russia! And this blessed activity did not disappear from the Russian land throughout the entire thousand years of Orthodox Russia, even though the historical circumstances were often less than favorable.

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* From the 2nd Edition, published by the St. Herman of Alaska brotherhood, Platina, California, 1977.

THE ORTHODOX WORD

During the last century and a half of the Romanov dynasty the horizon of righteous ones in Russia blazed up and was illuminated by an especially bright, unearthly light. This period has left behind an abundant literature, which if studied with reverence provides a key of sorts to the lost Paradise, and brightly illuminates for us our narrow path which leads through the dark night of our post-Christian era.

Orthodox Christians of today find themselves under the heavy oppression of the spirit of politics, partisanship, and the flattery of men, which in the end lead to reformationism, Protestantism and rampant sectarianism. In order to resist this it is insufficient simply to stress conservatism. We must nurture within ourselves a love and desire for that which is truly heavenly. This book is being published with this purpose in mind.

The nearly autobiographical Life of Father Zosima is without a doubt a classic work of our spiritual literature of the latter times. Herein is revealed a living panorama of the practical reality both of the life of silence in the desert, and the establishing of a coenobitic monastery with its cares. Here we see a holy simplicity and a profound philosophy of life in practice: the wisdom of Christ-like meekness, which is the humility of wisdom. This book ignites one with the flame of Orthodox inspiration.

Hieromonk Herman
January 17, 1977
The day of St. Anthony the Great
St. Herman of Alaska Monastery
Platina, California

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The Life of the great Siberian Elder Zosima, one of the treasures of the Russian Orthodox literature of recent centuries, is offered here to English-speaking Orthodox Christians. In a sense, this offering is premature: English-speaking Orthodoxy has no desert-dwellers, and in its present state of immaturity it is probably incapable of producing any; this is a kind of life above our measure. In this sense the present book is too "advanced," and might even serve to increase the self-esteem and pride that are sadly fostered by premature thoughts of "hesychasm" and the highest kind of angelic life.

On the other hand, however, this book well describes an essential missing dimension of our poor Orthodoxy in the West: the *sufferings* of true Orthodox Christian spiritual life, without which all attempts at monasticism are

ELDER ZOSIMA

only pretentious and empty. At the same time, the book shows the part played in these sufferings by an element that is, alas, already too present in the Orthodox life of Western converts: gossip, rumors, slanders, petty jealousies and other passions which do such incalculable harm to tender young Christian sprouts. The humble suffering of these temptations by Fr. Zosima and his community of sisters, and their Christian triumph over them, should be a source of great encouragement to all those who find themselves caught in the net of similar temptations.

The simple-hearted Christianity that breathes from every page of this book should be a source of inspiration for every Orthodox Christian reader who sincerely loves Christ and longs for His Heavenly Kingdom, whether he be layman or monastic. Indeed, the examples of "lay" Orthodox life in these pages are just as instructive as the monastic examples. How deeply genuine Christianity penetrated the soil of Holy Russia may be seen, not merely in the monastic heroes of the book, but even in the touching story of Fr. Zosima's brother, the monastic "failure" Elias, whose passionate nature did not erase the longing for God in his heart or prevent him from living a practical Christian life that puts us today, whether monastic or lay, to shame.

And what shall we say of the profound, deeply-committed and long-suffering Christian love revealed in the pages of this book? The mutual love of the Elder Basilisk and his disciple Zosima is so far above paltry half-heartedness that it should make us ashamed even to speak of "hesychasm" and "elders" and all the outward forms of a way of life which we are incapable even of understanding, let alone touching, because of our own lack of such burning love.

Thus, this book is very "down to earth" and recognizable to us at our low level, filled with the spirit of simple and basic Christianity, at the same time that it exalts and inspires us with its realistic accounts of true God-pleasers in the highest form of monastic life: the life of the desert, in the true spirit and tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Let us, then, be inspired by the desert life of Elders Basilisk and Zosima (even while realizing how far it is above us), but let us even more be humbled by seeing the sufferings they had to undergo, both those they imposed upon themselves and those sent or providentially allowed by God. Above all, may this book bear fruit in encouraging us even today to live the daily life of simple Christianity in practice, without which we can hardly hope to be saved.

Hieromonk Seraphim.

A NEW BOOK

THE LIFE OF

ELDER ZOSIMA

BY HIS NIECE SISTER BARBARA

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